

December 21, 2009

DAILY NEWS NYDailyNews.com

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DEVIAN SMITH

Rani Salons and Spas founder Rani Thukral said her son Anuj, who helps her run the family company, is her business inspiration.

Mother-and-son Inc.

Celebrating success years after 'living in the back of a store'

Rani Thukral knows guerrilla marketing. With practically no money, Thukral was determined to make a success of her salon and beauty products business.

She had overcome tough circumstances before: Thukral started her first business in New Delhi at the age of 16, opening a second salon over time and earning bachelor's and master's degrees, as well. She eventually immigrated to New York, her young son in tow.

Her foray into the American business world included free demonstrations of her products in a park and a nearby McDonald's. She also posted hand-written fliers on trees to spread the word about what's now Rani Salons and Spas.

It's hardly been easy but, after 15 years, Thukral's business now includes 14 salons throughout the metro area, as well as a skin care products line. Annual sales now top \$4 million.

She's quick to give away some of the credit. It was her son, Anuj Thukral, who was responsible for "taking my dream, turning it into a vision and mak-

ing it a reality," she said.

Anuj has helped his mother's business since he was 10. His hand has guided many aspects of her business — including the times his mom would demonstrate henna products on his hands for prospective clients.

He named the parent company, Rani Creations, of which he is CEO and president.

"It wasn't easy working so many hours and living in the back of a store as a young school boy, but thanks to the people of New York, who have brought us to the success we now know, we have been able to build this from the bottom up," he said.

ENTREPRENEURIAL AWARD

The Bayside, Queens, mother-and-son team were honored last month with a Stevie Award for Women in Business in the Best Entrepreneur category. (The award's name is derived from the Greek word *stephanos*, which means crowned.)

While the mom readily praises her son, it was Anuj who nominated his mother for the award.

"Money cannot buy it, and you can-

not compel people to give you awards or thanks, and that makes it more meaningful," he said. "For my mother, when she accepted this award, it felt like her day, much like a bride."

I spoke with other Stevie nominees during the awards ceremony — there were more than 1,100 nominations in 54 categories — many of whom had to overcome a variety of tough hurdles.

Lisa Quast, president of Career Woman, a Seattle consulting company dedicated to the advancement of women in business, worked her way from a customer service rep to an executive vice president at a global health care company.

She said she often faced gender discrimination earlier in her career, though she isn't bitter, but grateful — for the life lessons.

Your Money columnist Carolyn Kepcher, author of the best-selling business book, "Carolyn 101," and the upcoming "Work Her Way," is the former "Apprentice" star who thrived working for one of America's toughest bosses. She's now CEO of Carolyn & Company Media (workherway.com), an enterprise created by and for career women.

Carolyn
Kepcher



CAREER COACH